

James Madison to Edmund Pendleton, February 7, 1782. Transcription: The Writings of James Madison, ed. Gaillard Hunt. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1900-1910.

TO EDMUND PENDLETON.¹

1 From the Madison Papers (1840).

Philadelphia, February 7, 1782.

Dear Sir, —Congress are still occupied with the thorny subject of Vermont. Some plan for a general liquidation and apportionment of the public debts is also under their consideration, and I fear will be little less perplexing. It is proposed that until justice and the situation of the States will admit of a valuation of lands, the States should be applied to for power to substitute

such other rule of apportioning the expenditures as shall be equitable and practicable, and that Commissioners be appointed by the concurrent act of the United States and each State, to settle the accounts between them. The scheme is not yet matured, and will meet with many difficulties in its passage through Congress. I wish it may not meet with much greater when it goes down to the States. A spirit of accommodation alone can render it unanimously admissible; a spirit which but too little prevails, but which in few instances is more powerfully recommended by the occasion than the present. If our voluminous and entangled accounts be not put into some certain course of settlement before a foreign war

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is off our hands, it is easy to see they must prove an exuberant and formidable source of intestine dissensions.